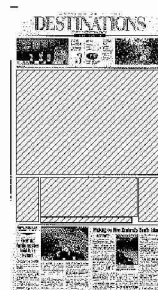




Above, left: Joseph Rogers of Pittsfield, N.H., demonstrates the craft of making a straw broom by hand. Above, right: Diane Chamberlain of Candia, N.H., demonstrates spinning wool with a "walking wheel." Top: A tour group gathers outside the Meeting House at Canterbury Shaker Village. (PHOTOS: DAVID LYON)



STORY CHAT: Visit our Web site, www.app.com, and click on this story in *Jersey Life* to tell us about your favorite places to see fall foliage.



By **PATRICIA HARRIS**
and **DAVID LYON**
CORRESPONDENTS

Driving down Shaker Road in Canterbury, N.H., in the slanting autumn light is like tunneling through a bower of bronze and gold.

Up and down the gentle hills, the two-lane blacktop undulates through thick woods of white and gray birches, red and white oaks, and sugar, mountain and silver maples.

At the highest hill, the road suddenly opens to the sky at Canterbury Shaker Village, an assemblage of spare white buildings surrounded by stone walls on a gentle south-facing slope. Straight, majestic rows of ancient sugar maples limn the perimeter of the grounds.

As the harvest period comes to a close, the gardens are a riotous jumble of seed heads, stout cabbages and broccoli, and sprawling vines of squash and pumpkins. While the village always projects a solemn grandeur, autumn is truly the finest season to visit.

Canterbury was founded in 1792 as the seventh Shaker community in the United States and reached its peak shortly before the Civil War, when more than 300 Shakers lived and worked here. The last two leaders, eldresses Bertha Lindsay and Gertrude Soule (who died in 1990 and 1988, respectively) established Canterbury Shaker Village as a museum to teach visitors about the sect's life and beliefs, even

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when the last Shakers were gone. When that final Canterbury Shaker died in 1992, the museum had been operating for more than two decades.

"I had the privilege to know the last two eldresses," said volunteer guide Mary Flinn. "I hope you'll feel like you know them a little after this tour."

Flinn led the group along the maple-lined path to the Meeting House.

"According to eldress Bertha,

this was a wonderful place to grow up," she said. "Bertha came here when she was 7 years old. The brothers and sisters (as Shakers called the men and women of the community) took the children on hayrides and sleigh rides."

Work as worship

In the Meeting House, excerpts from a film by documentary filmmaker Ken Burns introduce the Shakers' celibate lifestyle and religious beliefs. But walking the grounds where the Shakers lived, worked and worshipped makes the monastic community seem far more tangible.

Shakers embraced the hard labor of farm life, but they also welcomed modern technology. They electrified the village when gaslights still illuminated the New Hampshire State House, and installed running water and flush toilets by the early 20th century.

The Shakers considered work a form of worship. That idea becomes concrete in the Laundry, where clothes, bed linens and towels for the entire community were washed.

"Eldress Bertha told us that she had the happiest memories of the ironing room," Flinn said. "The sisters would sing as they worked and the kitchen sent refreshments over twice a day."

Kids get it

Judy Temple from Manchester, N.H., said she visits often.

"I saw the last eldress years and years ago. I bring a lot of guests from out of state because it's such a unique place," she said. This time, she had two grandchildren in tow.

Temple worried that the children might have little patience for the educational aspect of the tour, but the kids were entranced by the old-fashioned machinery — such as the agitators and spin dryer — and the sheer volume of the labor. They were equally engrossed by the School House's wooden desks

and old chalkboards.

"Bertha said the children did a lot of singing," Flinn explained. "The teachers made up songs to help them memorize state capitals or to learn the names of rivers."

The village offers a separate tour of the original Dwelling House, in steady use from 1793 until 1992. Men and women lived in separate wings, with the leaders in private or semi-private rooms and everyone else in crowded dormitories. Walls are lined with pegs to hold everything from dresses to chairs. Personal belongings were minimal and the furniture — perhaps the most enduring Shaker legacy — was spare and functional.

Keeping the craft alive

The structure was regularly renovated to suit changing needs.

"You're looking at 200 years of history here, not just a little slice," said volunteer guide Bruce Marriott.

For example, he pointed out simple wash basins in the dormitory bedrooms, then led his group into the women's communal bathroom installed in 1904.

"The Shakers embraced change," he said. "Hot baths and flush toilets were like heaven on Earth."

Broad gardens behind the main buildings help supply the village's farm stand and Shaker Table restaurant. A trail down the north side of the gardens circles a small pond, following along the edge of a forest of acid-yellow birch leaves and flame-colored maples.

Volunteers demonstrate crafts and farm tasks throughout the village. The Shakers' many inventions included the flat straw broom, which they produced for sale.

Joseph Rogers of Pittsfield, N.H., said he spends a day a week at the task.

"I learned to make brooms in a workshop here," he says, "and it's good to keep the craft alive. I meet a lot of nice people. If nobody comes . . . well, the work is

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satisfying."

It's also not uncommon to encounter members of the Northeast Handspinners Association at their spinning wheels.

"It just takes practice. Little girls of age 5 were spinning here," said Sue Raasch of Nottingham, N.H., as she turned fluffy wool to tight yarn on her treadle wheel.

"It's always fun to come here," Raasch said. "The serenity is still here."

IF YOU GO

CENTRAL NEW HAMPSHIRE

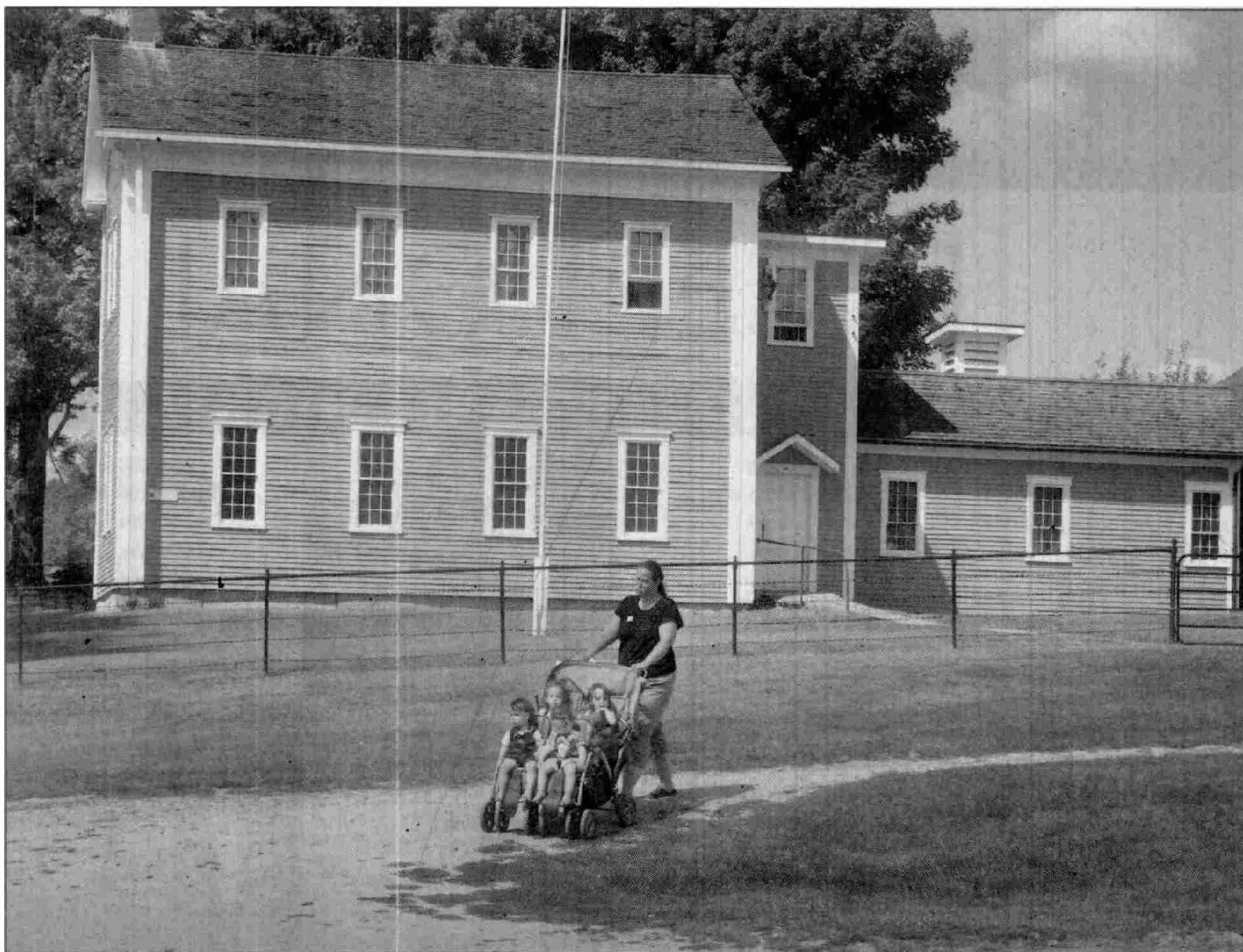
DETAILS: Canterbury Shaker Village is open daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m. through October; 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Fridays through Sundays in November. Upcoming events include Wool Day on Sept. 22 and Harvest Days

on Sept. 29 and 30. Admission: \$15 adults; \$7 children; (603) 783-9511.

LODGING: The Inn at Smith Cove on Lake Winnepesaukee in nearby Gilford has 12 rooms, 10 in the main inn, one in a two-story lighthouse and one in a tiny cottage. Double rooms: \$90 to \$170; (603) 293-1111.

DINING: The Shaker Table at Canterbury Shaker Village serves lunch or Sunday brunch daily and dinner on Fridays and Saturdays through Nov. 1, then lunch and dinner Fridays and Saturdays and brunch on Sundays until the village reopens in May. Dinner entrees: \$17 to \$32; lunch entrees: \$10.50 to \$17.50; (603) 783-4238.

INFO: Contact the New Hampshire Division of Travel and Tourism Development at (603) 271-2665. Visit our Web site, www.app.com, and click on this story in *Jersey Life* for links to **Canterbury Shaker Village** and the **New Hampshire tourism office**.

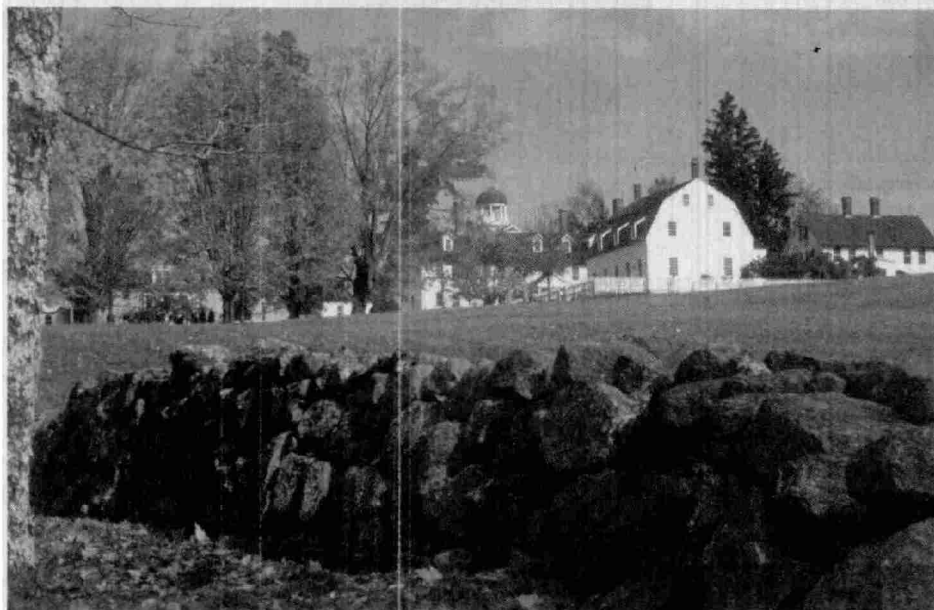
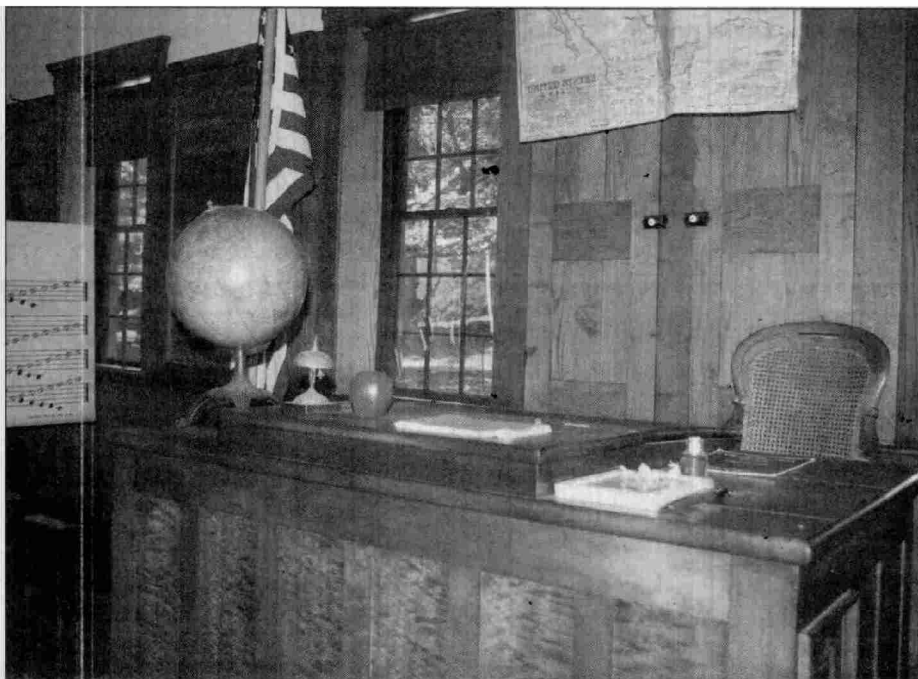


Touring Canterbury Shaker Village is a family activity. The school house is in the background. (PHOTOS: DAVID LYON and PATRICIA HARRIS)

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Sue Raasch (above) of Nottingham, N.H., spins fleece using a treadle wheel. A teacher's desk (right) in a one-room School House holds an outdated globe.



For two centuries, Canterbury Shaker Village (left) was a working farm community. Today, the village operates a farm stand (above).

Printing imperfections present during scanning